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ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER

INTELLIGENCE

An Admiral for Superspook?

With Paul Warnke's confirmation as the nation's chief arms negotiator expected, only one of the new Administration's top national security posts remains open: director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Late last week there were indications that it too would soon be filled. While three or four names were still being considered, White House aides let it be known that "the serious front runner" for Superspook had become President Carter's Naval Academy classmate Admiral Stansfield Turner, 53, commander of NATO's forces in Southern Europe.

If Turner is nominated, at least part of the reason may be that Carter has chosen to tiptoe carefully down the middle on the CIA question. His first choice for director, Theodore Sorensen, suddenly withdrew from consideration three days before the Inauguration because it had become apparent that he was unacceptable to a powerful coalition of liberals and conservatives on the Senate Intelligence Committee (TIME, Jan. 31). Members of the committee would not commit themselves when asked about Turner, but the admiral seems widely acceptable—to liberals, because he does not come from within the CIA's ranks, and to conservatives, who are reassured by his military background.

When Carter and the admiral received their ensign's stripes together at the 1946 Annapolis graduation, Turner was No. 1 in the class of 820, Carter No. 59. Even without the old school tie, however, Turner would more than qualify for a top Government slot. Insists a Carter aide: "We have been looking in the

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last two weeks for different kinds of people, for a new face. Jimmy has high respect for Turner." This sentiment seems to be shared by the admiral's service colleagues, who admire his intellectual breadth, capacity for hard work and—what may be most important to the President—proven skills as a manager.

A Rhodes scholar who earned an M.A. in foreign affairs at Oxford after his Annapolis years, the Chicago-born Turner has logged an impressive career both at sea and on land. Most of his ship time has been served aboard destroyers; after receiving his two rear-admiral stars in 1970, he commanded a cruiser-destroyer flotilla that stalked the Soviets' Mediterranean squadron. The following year he went to the Pentagon as the Navy's director of systems analysis.

Most impressive, perhaps, was Turner's 1972-74 stint as president of the Naval War College at Newport, R.I., which won him acclaim for his reforms of the curriculum. He jettisoned what he regarded as outdated and irrelevant courses in strategy and geopolitics and invited ideologically diverse civilian experts to lecture. In a 1973 address at the college, he warned that if military minds did not shape up fast, "the think tanks will be doing our thinking for us." He spurred far-ranging brainstorming seminars on how recent international developments affect U.S. strategy. One topic, for example, was the role of U.S. naval power at a time when the nation had begun importing increasing amounts of essential resources.

Just how Turner would tackle the CIA's major problems—low morale and uncertainty about the role of covert operations—is unknown. But liberals may find him receptive to reforms, for a Carter aide has described Turner as "a military man with a highly developed social conscience." Unless opposition to Turner suddenly surfaces in Congress or serious flaws in his background are unearthed, Carter could make his nomination official as soon as this week.